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Winchester Select Board says no to MBTA parking request

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October 29, 2024 . 6:00 AM — 2 min read

The Winchester Select Board recently turned down an MBTA request to use eight parking spots for buses, including underneath the train trestle. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/PETER CASEY

Like the old Nancy Reagan slogan, the Select Board has decided to "Just Say No" to the MBTA's request to take eight parking spaces on Waterf over weekends stretching from Nov. 2 to Dec. 22.

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“Four spaces on the town common side of the street and then spaces underneath the train trestle, kind of opposite Black Horse Tavern,” said Select Board Chair Michelle Prior, of the area.

Prior said the request has nothing to do with the renovation of the Winchester Center Station; the entire Lowell Line is going to be bused. What the MBTA needs is designated parking spaces on Waterfield for the buses to roll into.

Winchester officials have turned down the MBTA after it requested use of spots along Waterfield Road from Nov. 2 to Dec. 22. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/PETER CASEY

Prior said she as well as Town Manager Beth Rudolph, and Town Engineer Matt Shuman offered the MBTA alternative ideas such as Laraway, but, “They said no.” She also asked for weekend ridership data, how many people were using the Winchester Center stop, but she was told, “We don’t have that data.”

“I think the key piece is, if we don't grant the parking spaces, the buses won’t stop on Waterfield, but the buses will stop at the Wedgemere Station, and the buses will go to West Medford,” Prior said.

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"Which is what we've been living with the last two years, correct?" asked board member Bill McGonigle, referring to the Winchester Center renovation project.

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Rudolph said she would rely on downtown business owners and their thoughts on how it would impact their business.

Prior also noted, however, that if there were holiday festivities planned for the area, a visit from Santa or a Menorah lighting, they would have to be put on hold because the room for the buses would take precedence.

Board member Anthea Brady agreed taking away eight spaces in September would be a lot different than taking them away in November and December at the height of the holiday season.

"And as things get colder and the weather gets worse, I feel that people are less likely to walk or bike and more likely to drive downtown, and some of these are pretty prime spots, particularly under the railway," McGonigle added. "I'm also skeptical that we necessarily get the spots back on Dec. 22 because all these projects just go longer than we ever expect them to and I don't want to be giving up spots in perpetuity."

McGonigle also said he'd hate to dampen the spirit of new businesses downtown as well.

After Rudolph said, "I think I would take a vote to reject it," board member John Fallon made the motion to deny the MBTA's request for parking in Waterfield Road. The motion passed unanimously.

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And as a just-in-case scenario, Rudolph reminded them, "I think hear on Nov. 4 a public outrage that there's no service in Winchester, you

can always change your minds.

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The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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